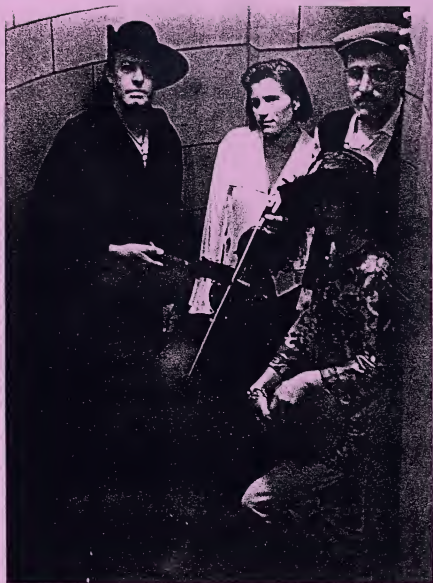




dark troubadour

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Owl-Stone the Minstrel & A Company of
Knaves

(traditional and medieval music of the
British Isles)

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Back Cover photo of Roderick the Red (Rodd Williams) by Chuck Owsfou

ONE NIGHT IN LOST CARCOSA by Ye Olde Editor

Well, here it is, the second issue of Dark Troubadour, this unusual magazine of fantasy/horror literature and folk/medieval/ethereal music. Someone recently told me that it was the weirdest of all combinations. Maybe so ... but it's the stuff I like, and just maybe there are some others out there as well who enjoy the same things. Jason Lambert, in a recent issue of "The Third Nail," said it was the magazine for people who like their Gothic music unplugged.

Thanks to all those who contributed something to this issue.

Most of all, it's with a heavy heart that I share the news that my friend, writer Karl Edward Wagner, has passed away. I called Karl this past September, just as he was preparing to leave for England. I asked him to look for a just released live version of "Matty Groves" by the English band Eden Burning. I was unaware of how sick he was. He was coughing and I asked, "Do you have a cold, or what?" "I think it's 'or what," he answered with a laugh. Then he coughed again.

That was the last time I spoke to him. Twenty minutes later he was off to England for a month. In October I received a letter from Salamander Scarlett (Lynne Gauger). In it she said that two days after he

returned to the States, Karl died. I stood outside the rural Ardara post office stunned. Obviously, the "or what" was worse than I could have possibly imagined.

Salamander has her own tribute to Karl in this issue, in prose and verse. I suppose that there are a lot of things that could be said. I remember reading "Sticks" in a book called "Night Chills" back in the late 70's. The introduction to the story said that Karl lived in Chapel Hill, NC. I was working on my own additions to the Cthulhu Mythos at the time, and I called Karl up to ask him where I could market my work. This led to a phone friendship that lasted till that final call.

Karl and I met only twice, at the World Fantasy Conventions in Baltimore (80) and New Haven (82). At New Haven I was on my way to meet my agent when Karl reeled into the elevator like a wild eyed Viking. "What a party!" he roared, then exited at the next floor, a group of fans in tow.

I enjoyed Karl's Kane stories, his supernatural tales of the Southern Mountains, and his pieces of eldritch horror. I shall miss him. For the last several years I had been bugging him about finishing up the "At First, Just Ghostly" book. In fact I shared a humorous piece with him right after reading that story in WEIRD TALES. I read it one cold Saturday afternoon. Then I had to go up to the Giant Eagle supermarket. If you've read the story, you know there are several references (as well as the title) to Procol Harum's "A Whiter Shade of Pale."

As I drove up the road, the song came on the radio. A coincidence? In the story, synchronicity played a big part. Was this synchronicity? As I was ready to check out of the store, the muzak began to play "A Whiter Shade of Pale," and the checkout girl began to sing it. More synchronicity? When I stopped at the South Side Beehive coffeehouse that night, I was taking my coffee to one of the tables. The words "as I wandered through my playing cards" came to my mind as I sat down at my table. Someone had left a card there. .. the Queen of Spades. Still more synchronicity.

Karl had a laugh over that.

A few months ago I dreamed of Karl.

I had just finished playing in the wee hours of the night. The Inn of the Scarlet Salamander was nearly empty as I pulled on my cloak and slouch hat and headed for the oaken door. I had strapped my mandolin case over my back and I stepped out into the cool of the night.

I stood in a deserted thoroughfare in lost Carcosa. White marble towers reared up toward the fiery stars. Gemstones set in the masonry sparkled with dark fire in the starlight. The nearer moon was peeking redly above the Cloud Sea, washing the night with its ruddy illumination. My boots echoed on the cobblestones as I walked along. I had gone several blocks when a cloaked figure stepped out of the shadows. He threw back his hood and I recognized him at once. It was Karl.

A good performance tonight," he said, smiling.

"You were there?" I asked, amazed. I hadn't noticed him.

He nodded. "In the back. I didn't care to be recognized. Not here in Carcosa."

It was something that Kane might have said.

"I'm leaving here tonight ... sailing away. I just stopped long enough to tell you that I enjoyed the performance."

With that, he turned and was swallowed once again by the shadows.

"Farewell, my friend," I called after him.

There was no answer.

Chuck Owston





KARL EDWARD WAGNER -- IN REMEMBRANCE

I saw you in a dream last night
Flashing by on a brand of motorcycle
Known only in the lands of Dream
Your red gold hair
Flying in the wind
Gleaming in the moonlight
Your face -- a younger you
Than I ever knew
Eyes bright with untold tales
On your way, perhaps
To meet Howard and Manly
At the Inn of a Thousand Cats
In Ulthar on the River Skai
To drink some moontree wine
While the cats lap cream
And to tell stories...
Stories that one day
We may be invited to sit at your table,
Have some Dreamwine;
And listen to...

My friend, I miss you
But if you are happy
I am happy for you too.

Salamander
Scarlette

Along the shore the cloud waves break,
The twin suns sink behind the lake,
The shadows lengthen.

In Carcosa,
Strange is the night where black stars rise,
And strange moons circle through the skies,
But stranger still is

Lost Carcosa
Songs that the Hyades shall sing,
Where flap the tatter of the King,
Must die unheard in

Dim Carcosa,
Song of my soul, my voice is dead,
Die though, unsung, as hair unshed
Shall dry and die in

Lost Carcosa
Cassilda's Song in "The King in Yellow"
Act 1, Scene 2.

KARL EDWARD WAGNER -- IN LOVING MEMORY

By Salamander Scarlette (Lynn Gauger)

When Chuck Owston asked me to write a few lines in memory of Karl Edward Wagner, I immediately thought of the last issue of *DARK TROUBADOUR*, in which Chuck interviewed Karl. The article was accompanied by a photo of Karl and I, taken at the Horrorcon '94 in Phoenix. I only saw Karl in person at these conventions. How I wish now that I would have taken him up on his invitations to visit Chapel Hill.

The first convention I attended was the World Fantasy Convention in Minneapolis. I was wandering about in the dealers' room, looking at Arkham House first editions and other objects to make a broke horror collector cry, when I met Brian Lumley, who introduced me to -- I couldn't believe it -- Karl Edward Wagner !!! -- of whom I had been a fan since reading "Sticks" in Gahan Wilson's "First World Fantasy Convention." I'd never even dreamed of actually meeting Karl. But we had been friends since that moment and talked on the phone at least twice a week, as well as writing. It was long distance, but it didn't seem to matter.

Anyway, I'm not going to talk about Karl's outstanding talent as a writer and editor. I'm not going to talk about the lamented (and, sadly, never to be revived) Carcosa Press) His fans know all that.

I'd like to talk about how I shall miss my friend, whose calls and funny letters could make me laugh in the middle of my worst depressions. I'd like you to know about my friend Karl, who sent me little gifts and never, ever forgot me. The Karl Wagner who, having only known me an hour or two, bought me a \$150 edition of "The King In Yellow," simply because I could recite the Carcosa poem! Lost Carcosa. Karl said that anyone who could recite the poem (especially a girl) deserved to have the book. I felt funny accepting it, but it made him so happy to give it. I have treasured it, especially now. It, along with the long out of print "The World of Kane" that he sent me when I was ill one time, have places of honor on my bookshelves.

This was the Karl Edward Wagner who was my friend. One of

the best friends anyone could have. It is not the material things that Karl gave me so much as the intangible that I treasure.

It is Karl himself. If one of his friends had too much to drink -- if someone was short a few dollars -- there was Karl, not waiting to be asked, but offering help. If Karl was your friend, he was your friend to the end. I won't say that he didn't get taken advantage of. He did. And this hurt him very much.

But to remember the good times -- a dinner with Karl and Brian Lumley and his lady Silkie . . . hanging out with Dennis Etchison . . . the Japanese dinner in Birmingham, England with Dennis and Ramsey Campbell and family . . . all the wonderful people I never would have met, the things I would have missed . . .

How Karl took some fans up to his hotel room and talked with them for hours. I'm still in touch with these people. So was Karl. Breaking the news to fans who became friends was one of the hardest things I ever had to do.

Karl enriched my life in innumerable way . . . I'd never heard of DARK TROUBADOUR or the under-appreciated Chuck Owston , for example. Nor would I have met and corresponded with many wonderful people on both sides of the Atlantic.

Karl left England on 10 October 1994. I was at Ronald Chetwynd Hayes' house when we got the news from Brian Lumley that Karl had passed on.

Chuck's interview was Karl is, I believe the last English one. A French journalist, Thomas Bauderet, got the very last one before we left Birmingham to go back to London.

Karl's fans have lost a lot . . .

He wanted to revise "The Fourth Seal," he had a new short story collection all ready, and I have no idea who could possibly fill his shoes as editor of "Year's Best Horror," a task that left him so little time to work on his own stories . . . But he loved it and did it well.

He would stop and sign books for any fan, anytime, any where. He has stories in nearly every modern horror anthology, both British and American. His work has been illustrated by some of the finest horror artists in the field.

For those of us who knew Karl as a friend -- the loss is indescribable. A part of me died with Karl, but a part of Karl lives on

in all of us who loved him, and especially in you -- his readers -- who bring him back to life every time you read or re-read one of his stories.

All of us who were with him in London toward the end knew he was very ill, and being an M.D. himself, he must have known it was hopeless. He would not see a doctor, but chose to say goodbye to his friends, go home, and in his own house, not a hospital, die with his autonomy and dignity -- his own way.

Karl Edward Wagner has joined the ranks of Legend. He will be sadly missed and fondly remembered.

Salamander Scarlette



Karl Edward Wagner (1945-1994) and Salamander
photo by Beth Guinn





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I first heard this band at the 1993 Halloween concert in Squirrel Hill. They played on the same bill as Strange Boutique and Pittsburgh's The Garden. It was an interesting, entertaining evening, with most of the audience decked out all in black.

I enjoyed Siddal that evening. I assume they get their name from Elizabeth Siddal, the doomed wife of painter/poet Dante Rossetti, one of the Pre-Raphaelites.

This CD has been long awaited by those who enjoy the ethereal sound in their music. Haunting, ghostly vocals amid the wash of keyboards and guitars best describes the sound of Siddal. When they played here, they had a dancer/performance artist who did a Middle Eastern routine (in costume) to the music. It was an added touch of brilliance. Here, on the CD, we're limited to only the aural feast . . . and feast indeed it is.

From the first cut, "Circus Fire," the listener is caught up in the waves of an electronic ocean, while the voice of Elaine Winters echoes out of the depths like that of an enchanted lorelei. The other member of the band is Richard Brinkley, who I assume is the guitarist. Sadly, there's no list in the booklet of who does what, and no photos of the band, but, hey, you can't have everything.

On "The Pedestal" Elaine's voice echoes off in the distance, multi-tracked in harmony.. "Hiding Home" would be suitable for the soundtrack of a movie about the supernatural . . . like an old fashioned ghost story that sticks in your mind long after the telling.

"Treasures of Sleep" starts off with gentle acoustic piano, then moves into the electronic ocean once again, carrying the listener into the arms of Morpheus, down the seven hundred steps of deeper slumber to the Dreamlands of H.P. Lovecraft and Lord Dunsany.

"Lighthouse Wreckage" features more angelic harmonies, with the same kind of sound that marked Julianne Regan's work with All About Eve, especially that band's final studio album, "Ultraviolet."

The final cut, "Fairbanks" again brings the acoustic piano to the fore, conjuring up images of shadowy Victorian mansions awash in the light of a setting sun, while an old clock ticks off the final moments of your life. Dust motes drift lazily downward in the dying red light, like the forgotten memories of the dead. The scent of strange perfume, exotic and mysterious, comes to your nostrils. You're reminded of something, but it slips off the edge of your consciousness into the chasm of oblivion. You turn as you heard the rustle of a lace gown on a spiral staircase. But there's no one there . . .

I love this CD! If you like your music touched with the fragile beauty of a tropical moth's wing, or a dew spangled spiderweb by moonlight, then you should definitely check out Siddal. It will be money well spent.

Chuck Owston



HYPNOS -- DREAMS FOR SLEEPWALKERS

Out of Pennsylvania comes the band Hypnos. This tape makes me think of angels being caught off guard in some misty forest. Ethereal beauty abounds in these ancient sounding reminiscences. A Gothic dream unfolds as the voices of Alice Marie Alexander and Chuck Owston blend. The music, which consists of keyboards, cittern and mandola is beauty personified, especially if you like the sounds of the new ethereal movement. Alice's vocals are classic in the Celtic style, and Mr. Owston's are able to evoke thoughts of dark minstrels' sagas. Very recommended independent fare. One of my favourites! Available from Chuck Owston, Box 162, Ardara, P.A 15615 for \$8 postpaid.

Christine Lambert



KATE PRICE -- THE TIME BETWEEN

I found this CD in one of those "nature/environmental" stores at the Mall. It was among the Enya and Loreena McKennit releases. And that's exactly where it belongs. Kate Price plays the hummel, a Scandinavian type of lap dulcimer that reminds you of a lute. She also plays hammered dulcimer and keyboards. Her voice is one of those pure, clear voices that is suited for folk music with a medieval slant. Most of these songs fit in that category. Her instrumental pieces remind one of gypsy music, evoking images of pretty dark eyed girls dancing around the campfire. Kate wrote all of the songs except W.B.. Yeats' "The Stolen Child," to which she set to music (not at all like the way the Waterboys did it), and "The Ballad of the Bog." This is a scary, supernatural song written by Mark W. Lewis and Craig Coulter. It sounds like a traditional ballad out of the lost ages of antiquity. Very spooky. There's not a bad song on the entire collection.

I don't know if Kate Price tours, but I'd like to see her in concert. I hope she continues to record, because this effort is a real gem.

Chuck Owston



OLD BLIND DOGS INTERVIEW -- Pittsburgh, PA

The Old Blind Dogs played here in November 1994 at Mullaney's Harp and Fiddle.

They were advertised as a combination traditional Scots music and Seattle-style grunge rock, a description that this writer, and the band as well, thought hilarious. They did a great job of ripping through the folk-rock classics like "Cruel Sister" and "Bedlam Boys," as well as Scots ballads like "McPherson's Rant." The Old Blind Dogs are Ian Benzie, vocals and guitar; Jonny Hardie, violin and mandolin; Buzzby McMillan, bass and cittern; and Dave Cattanach, drums and percussion. They hail from Aberdeen, Scotland. At the close of the concert, ye olde editor had the opportunity to talk with two of the members of the band, Jonnie and Buzzby. Here's what followed (sorry about the faulty tape recorder).

DT: How long has the band been together?

J: It's been performing there and a half years.

DT: What were your musical influences before this?

B: We all come from pretty diverse backgrounds. We've done diverse things.

J: Reggae, Rock, Classical, Country, Folk Revival> Ian came out of the folk revival . . . Bob Dylan . . . 60's folk . . . Donovan . . . he did a lot of that.

DT: A lot of people's first experience with Scottish folk music was Donovan.

J: He came into folk music through Bob Dylan.

DT: Your cittern tuning (a ten string cittern) . . . what is that?



Old Blind Dogs

B: G D G B G "Good Dogs Get Big . . . (background noises drown out the last word). Exactly the same as a 5 - string banjo, except the bottom string is down. It doesn't start halfway up the fingerboard.

DT: Where did you get the name "Old Blind Dogs?"

B: Old Blind Dogs is from an old Appalachian folk song. (He begins to sing)

The Old Blind Dog has stolen the sausages . . . down in
Alabam'

The old gray mare has died in the wilderness . . . down in
Alabam'

DT: An American song which probably came from the British Isles originally?

J: Down in Alabam? We didn't have an Alabama . . .

DT: No. I mean the tune.

B: We did it on the 5-string banjo. We used to do a lot of banjo stuff . . . you can hear a lot of stuff out of the Appalachians that came from the British Isles. The Everly Brothers first album "Songs Our Daddy Taught Us." has a lot of that stuff.

DT: How long is your tour lasting?

B: We've been here nine days? Another three weeks?

J: Three weeks.

DT: I saw your tour schedule in Dirty Linen, but this engagement wasn't listed.

B: It keeps changing. Due to technical problems, It doesn't make much sense anymore.

DT: Do you do any original material?

J: Yeah, but not a great deal.

B: Jonnie writes tunes, a fair amount of melodies.

J: One or two . . . no words ... (a lot of background obscures)

B: Ian wrote a song on the most recent album that sounds like a traditional folk song.

DT: What are your future plans? Besides touring here? Back to Scotland?

B: Back home to Scotland. We'll be back over here in February.

J: We might not be coming back here . . . Pittsburgh. There's a third tour on the pipeline as well.

DT: Are your tours set up by Divine Celtic Sounds?

B: A lot of it. It's highly difficult to set up a tour. can't do it by yourself.

J: They did a good job here tonight. There's a lot of people here tonight.

B: When we get back to Aberdeen, we're going to be working with new management set up . . . there's a lot of these festivals down in England . . . (drowned out by a loudmouthed woman in the background)

This noisy outburst, unfortunately brought the interview to an end.



THE GUV'NOR -- ASHLEY HUTCHINGS

When I went to England in 1992, I had the opportunity to meet the legendary Ashley "Tyger" Hutchings. It was at the Fairport rehearsals at the Banbury Art Center. He was a great guy, open and friendly. He introduced me around to several other fans of Fairport.

For those of you unfamiliar with Hutchings ... he was one of the founding members of both Fairport and Steeleye Span. He's one of the people who put British folk-rock on the map. This collection is a sampling of archival and rare tracks from his nearly 30 years of innovative musicianship. The Cd begins in 1966 with the Ethnic Shuffle Orchestra, a 20's style jug band (which featured a young Simon Nicol on 12-string guitar). It ends with the 1993 lineup of the Albion Band (which, incidentally, features a more mature Simon Nicol). As they say, "It all comes 'round again."

Between these extremes lies seventy three minutes of great music, featuring unreleased Fairport tunes from 1967-69.

There's the vocal harmonies of Sandy Denny and Ian Matthews, along with the hot slide guitar by Richard Thompson. Under it all is the steady bass playing of the Guv'nor.

This collection contains a veritable who's who of British folk-rock: Martin Carthy, Maddy Prior, Shirley Collins, John Tams, Ric Sanders, Cathy Le Surf, Dave Whetstone, Barry Dransfield, Peter Knight, Clive Gregson, Dave Mattacks, plus less known (although not less talented) players. A great collection, Volume One> I can't wait for Volume Two to come out.

The acapella version of "Lay Down Your Weary Tune" is simply great. Maddy Prior's voice soars above those of the blokes as they do the definitive version of this Dylan song. And we get to hear the story of the "Sailor's Life" as sung by John Tams in one of the many incarnations of the Albion Band.

Ashley Hutchings is a true Renaissance Man -- he does one man shows with spoken word; he's recorded such ground breaking records as "The Complete Dancing Master" and "Morris On; he's been a moving force in at least three of the greatest bands in the British Isles; and he's still doing it!

"The Guv'nor" is a great tribute to a great man. Thanks Ashley, for putting it out. I always wondered what the Ethnic Shuffle Orchestra sounded like...

Chuck Owston



Richard Thompson and Ashley Hutchings
Banbury Arts Centre, August 12, 1992



FAIRPORT CONVENTION -- THE JEWEL IN THE CROWN -- Woodworm Records U.K./Green Linnet U.S.

The long awaited release by Fairport Convention shows that these fellows are not some folk-rock dinosaurs living off former days of 60's glory. These cuts are well thought out, well crafted songs by the blokes who do it better than anybody else. The title song, a political statement about Britain and its colonial Empire, is truly a gem. I first heard this tune on a video tape shot at the Bottom Line in New York last August. I was impressed then. Even more so with state of the art recording techniques -- there's nothing dated about the sound, thanks to Dave Pegg's Woodworm Studios.

"Slip Jigs And Reels" is a tale of an outlaw immigrant with nice violin work by Ric Sanders, Simon's voice never sounded better. This is the kind of song that was made for him. The instrumental "A Surfeit of Lampreys" (based on the story that King Henry I of England died after eating too many lampreys) begins with Peggy's bass and leads into some nice bouzar (bouzouki/guitar) work by Maart (Martin Alcock for the uninformed).

There's not a bad cut on the CD, but among my favorites is "The Islands," a Ralph McTell/Maart collaboration. It has a great opening line, "We do not fear the longships, we've seen longships before . . ." You can almost see the Vikings on the horizon. Yet this is not just an epic of long ago. There's a bit about ecological disaster as well.

On a lighter note we have "The Naked Highwayman," which you just have to hear. It's the hilarious tale of a fellow who takes to the Road, only to be outsmarted by one of the fairer sex.

There's a dark side to this collection as well. "Diamonds and Gold" is a tragedy that has been repeated too many times . . . the beautiful girl who is exploited for her beauty . . . with fatal results.

"Red Tide" is another. In the liner notes, the songwriter, Rob Beattie says, "The first verse is about despair and depression, the second about drunkenness and lust and the third is about death. Not many laughs really."

There's also a nice Ric Sanders violin piece called "Summer in December." It ranks right up there with his opus "Portmerion."

Throughout the CD the instrumental work is first class, driven by DM's solid drumming. Leonard Cohen's "Closing Time" ends the album, with Simon growling out the lyrics over real background noises recorded in an Oxfordshire pub.

Fifteen songs in all, and not a weak one among 'em.

Spend an hour with Fairport Convention . . . you won't regret it. Available in the US at Paul's CDs (see ad elsewhere in this issue) . . . soon to be released on Green Linnet in America.

By the way, the photo in the booklet of Dave Pegg is a classic. Check it out.

Fairport Convention is coming to the US in early Summer of 1995. If you're in the Northeast Corridor you ought to try to hear them play live. It's a great experience. If you're planning to travel to see them, it's advisable to call ahead and reserve tickets. .

I guarantee I'll be there!

Chuck Owston



Dave Pegg borrows a little hair from Dewey Gurall

MOTHS -- 'THE HERON'S DAUGHTER' A Reissue Rarity

This CD is a real oddity in the world of folk-rock music. It was recorded somewhere around 1969 in Britain ... and never released. Only a test pressing of the LP exists ... which was put on CD for us old blokes who love that late 60's acoustic hippie music. This is the kind of thing they used as a backdrop for movies back then -- a bunch of longhairs sitting around their pad, day-glo posters on the walls, smoky tendrils of incense lazily floating upwards. A guy picked a guitar, another gently tapped the bongoes and another played haunting flute solos, while long haired, wistful girls "grooved" to the sounds.

That what the Moths sound like.

There's no song list, no list of personnel, nothing ... but 36 minutes of spacey acoustic music in the psych-folk mold of Donovan, the Incredible String Band, and Tyrannosaurus Rex.

If those artists are your cup o' tea, the Moths CD is worth seeking out. There are songs by Bert Jansch, Tim Buckley, Bob Dylan, and even the Moths themselves. "The Heroin's Daughter" is one of those lost gems that could have been a folk-rock standard and a coffeehouse staple had this recording seen the light of day.

Not for everyone ... but if your tastes run to tie-dyed shirts and bell bottoms, you might just dig it. Faaaaar out!

Chuck Owston



LOVE SPIRALS DOWNWARDS -- ARDOR



This release is another typical example of the ethereal sound that has become so popular these days. The follow up to "Idylls", this CD continues in the path set forth by the original. One of the main strengths are the beautiful instrumentals scattered throughout, though Suzanne Perry's vocals are lovely, if not exceptional. Some of the best tracks are "Will You Fade," "Depression Glass," "Tear Love From My Mind," and "Sunset Bell." If you liked "Idylls" and most of the other Projekt bands, you'll love "Ardor." There are wonderful lyrics and hypnotic instrumental tracks by Ryan Lum, and even a track written by Sam Rosenthal. I strongly recommend this CD.

Debbie Rush

ERIC WOLLO -- SOLSTICE



This collection of beautiful instrumental soundtrack landscapes is wonderful to listen to at night. It sounds like every track flows beautifully into the next without losing any continuity. Because of that it has a very mesmerizing effect. Most of the pieces feature synthesizers, though one track, "Andromeda," features lovely female vocals from Katerine Floden. Wollo is often featured on radio shows like "Hearts of Space" and "Echoes," and with good reason. This is the best soundtrack style release I have heard in a long time. I hope that Wollo's music is appreciated by a wider audience, and that he puts out more hypnotic music like "Solstice" soon.

Debbie Rush

SARBAND -- LLIBRE VERMELL -- THE RED BOOK

Sarband is joined by Osnabrucker Jugend Chor on this release, "The Red Book," and it is subtitled "Medieval Pilgrim Songs From Spain." Look for this CD in either the classical or early music section of your favorite record store.

This collection contains a wide variety of material, from acapella choir chants, to solo pieces, to vocal/instrumental songs that feature such exotic instruments as the Vielle, Hurdy Gurdy, Shawm, Psaltery, Cornetto, Ud, Portative Organ, Medieval Lute and Arab Percussion. There's not a guitar to be found anywhere.

Although most of the songs (in Latin) have religious significance, mostly being praises to the Virgin Mary, there's also one song from the days of the Black Death, a Danse Macabre called "Ad Mortem Festivamus." These are real songs from long ago, and even the instruments sound olde. If you want a glimpse of what some of the music (of the Spanish variety) in the Middle Ages really sounded like, check out Sarband.

chuck owston



The latest release by Ireland's premier traditional band has been hailed by many as their best so far. Although I haven't heard all of Altan's releases, I can't imagine them having one better than this, as it is an almost perfect collection of Celtic music, performed impeccably. The instrumental pieces are done very traditionally but with an energy level that sometimes is lacking in Celtic music, and Mairead Ní Mhaonaigh's wonderful vocals bring the ballads to life in a captivating way.

The highlights are the vocal pieces "Dulaman," based on a children's rhyme, and "The Jug of Punch," an uptempo number with memorable melody. The instrumental pieces are all good, and make it difficult to pick a favorite. The only reservation that I have about the release is that the three slower vocal songs sound somewhat the same, but this is a very minor complaint, as they are spaced well on the album, and each one is beautiful in and of itself.

If you are planning to buy some Celtic music in the near future, make this one of your choices. If you're not a Celtic music fan, and wonder what the fuss is about, this is a great place to find out.

Rob Grano



MUSIC IN THE GREAT HALL

This CD is subtitled "Instrumental Music From The Ancient Celtic Lands."

It is released on Maggie Sansone's Maggie's Music label and features the Ensemble Galilei. This is a fine piece to listen to while reading Arthurian romances or your favorite medieval mystery novel. It's just nice to sit and listen to as well. There is quite a variety of instrumentation, from Sue Richard's Celtic harp to Maggie's hammered dulcimer. However, my particular favorite is the viola de gamba, played by Carolyn Anderson Surrick. The sound is somewhere between a violin and a cello. Add the fine acoustics of the "Great Hall" of St. John's College and you have a stunning masterpiece of ancient music. Very restful and relaxing. Write for a catalogue. This is just one of many fine instrumental releases on the label. Maggie's Music, Box 4144, Annapolis, MD 21403



GREETINGS FROM SALAMANDER -- REVIEWS

WHO KNOWS WHEN YOU'LL BE READING THIS, BUT I HOPE ALL YOU DARK TROUBADOURS HAD A NICE EASTER AND/OR MAY EVE. YESTERDAY, THE 15TH OF APRIL, A FAIRLY NEW LITTLE RECORD STORE HAD A BAND CALLED ALCHEMY PLAYING IN THE BACK ROOM. I USE THE WORD "AWESOME" A LOT, BUT THIS BAND IS!

ALCHEMY IS LORELI ON VOCALS OF PHENOMENAL BEAUTY. SHE FEELS WHAT SHE SINGS, AND IT'S VERY OBVIOUS. SHE ALSO WRITES THE LYRICS, MELODIES AND HARMONIES. PTERAN AND HIS KEYBOARDS PROVIDE ALL THE APPROPRIATE PAN PIPES, VOCODER, MELODICA, PERCUSSION, BELLS AND REALLY COOL SOUNDSCAPES.

ANYWAY, THEY WILL BE PLAYING ON THE 19TH AT A CHICAGO CLUB CALLED THURSTON'S -- FOR MONEY THIS TIME -- AN A GUY FROM THE CLUB BERLIN ASKED THEM TO PLAY. I WAS MOVED TO GRAB A PILE OF FLYERS AND PASS THEM OUT ON THE STREET.

WHILE THEIR SELF-TITLED CD CANNOT QUITE DESCRIBE THE FEELING OR AURA THAT WAS AT THIS LIVE PERFORMANCE, IT'S STILL ONE OF THE BEST THINGS I'VE HEARD IN QUITE A WHILE. ASK YOUR LOCAL RECORD STORE TO ORDER IT FROM: CYBERSANCTUM, PO BOX 3208, SKOKIE, IL 60076. PHONE: 708/329-1937 IF YOU'D RATHER ORDER IT DIRECT. BUT A RECORD STORE THAT IS GOTHIC-FRIENDLY SHOULD BE ABLE TO GET IT FOR YOU. BUY THIS. LISTEN TO IT. ENJOY IT. REVEL IN IT. IF ALCHEMY COMES TO YOUR TOWN, GO SEE THEM. IT'S AN EXPERIENCE, EVEN IN THE BACK ROOM OF

A RECORD STORE!

NOW ALL OF YOU READERS OF THIS LITTLE, BUT EXCELLENT PUBLICATION HAVE PROBABLY HEARD YOUR EDITOR-PUBLISHER PLAY LIVE. I HAVEN'T YET AND SO I ENVY YOU. BUT I HAVE LOTS OF HIS MUSIC ON TAPE. OWL-STONE'S DARK AGES WILL DELIGHT BOTH THE FOLK LOVER AND THE GOTHIC ROCKER ALIKE, AND LOTS OF OTHERS WHO DON'T CLASSIFY THEMSELVES BY MUSICAL TASTE AT ALL. THIS TAPE IS JUST SOMETHING YOU'VE GOT TO HEAR. CHUCK DOESN'T KNOW I'M REVIEWING IT AND I DON'T GET PAID, SO I AM SINCERE IN MY PRAISE. MY PERSONAL FAVOURITE IS THE FIRST SONG "THREE PALE QUEENS." IT'S DEFINITELY THE MOST GOTHIC. THE WHOLE TAPE LEANS MUCH MORE TO GOTHIC WITHOUT LOSING THE TRADITIONAL FOLK SOUND WE'VE COME TO ASSOCIATE WITH OWL-STONE AND HIS COMPANY OF KNAVES. THIS IS PRETTY DARK . . . VERY BEAUTIFUL MUSIC. I'M LOOKING FORWARD TO DARK AGES II, III, IV . . . (I DON'T DO SEQUELS -- ED.) SEE THE AD ELSEWHERE IN THIS ISSUE FOR LOCATIONS WHERE YOU CAN BUY IT, PLUS ORDERING INFORMATION.

NOSFERATU -- PROPHECY/LEGEND/RISE

THE VAMPIRE LOVER'S GOTHIC BAND. DANCEABLE, DARK AND HAUNTINGLY BEAUTIFUL. THEIR FIRST CD RISE IS A KIND OF VAMPIRE STORY TOLD THROUGH THE SONGS. SONGS LIKE "LAMENT," "LUCY IS RED," "VAMPIRE'S CRY," "DARK ANGEL" . . . YOU GET THE PICTURE, I'M SURE. NO GOTHIC COLLECTION IS COMPLETE WITHOUT AT LEAST THE FIRST NOSFERATU ALBUM.

THE SECOND RELEASE, LEGEND, HAS SOME REMIXES OF THE SONGS ON RISE, DIFFERENT ENOUGH SO AS NOT TO BE A RIP-OFF. THIS ALBUM HAS A STARKER SOUND . . . LESS SYNTHY. THE FIRST SONG, "THE WICCAMAN" IS MY FAVOURITE ON LEGEND. THERE ARE A FEW OTHER EXCELLENT NON--RE-MIX ORIGINAL SONGS TOO. LET ME STRESS: THE RE-MIXES SOUND SO DIFFERENT AS TO BE COMPLETELY DIFFERENT SONGS. RECOMMENDED VERY HIGHLY. AS SOON AS "WICCAMAN" BEGINS, YOU'LL SEE WHY I PRAISE IT SO HIGHLY. NOW THE LATEST: PROPHECY, FEATURING ALL NEW SONGS, LIKE "FAREWELL MY LITTLE EARTH," "TIME OF LEGENDS," "SHADOWMAKER," "SUCKER FOR YOUR LOVE" (A SILLY NAME FOR A GREAT SONG!!!) EVERY SONG ON THE CD IS WORTH THE PRICE OF THE ENTIRE ALBUM! I GUESS IT'S OBVIOUS THAT THIS ENGLISH GOTHIC BAND IS ONE OF SALAMANDER'S FAVOURITES. I HOPE TO SEE THEM LIVE ON MY UPCOMING TRIP TO EUROPE AND THE UK.

FOR A GREAT CATALOGUE, CALL 1-800-CD LASER AND ASK FOR THE CATALOGUE AND SUPPLEMENTS. YOU CAN ORDER RIGHT OVER THE PHONE WITH YOUR CREDIT CARD. THEY HAVE ALL THE PROJEKT STUFF, LIKE LOVE IS COLDER THAN DEATH, LYCIA, PLUS ALL KINDS OF OTHER GREAT CD'S, EVEN SOME VINYL IMPORTS TOO. THE ETHEREAL TO THE INDUSTRIAL AND ALL IN BETWEEN. A MUST FOR GOTHS. DON'T MISS OUT!

PORTFOLIO -- STEELEYE SPAN

IF YOU'RE INTO MEDIEVAL GOTH OR "SOFT" GOTH, OR BANDS LIKE ALL ABOUT EVE OR ORDO

EQUITUM SOLIS AND THE PROJEKT - TYPE STUFF, THEN BUY THIS. THIS IS WHERE THESE BANDS GOT THEIR INSPIRATION -- OR A LOT OF IT.

PORTFOLIO HAS ALL OF STEELEYE SPAN'S "HITS" -- OR SONGS THAT GOT ON THE CHARTS IN THE UK AND MADE MONEY FOR THE RECORD COMPANY. LOTS OF THE SONGS HAS THE USUAL BLOODY THEMES. "FIGHTING FOR STRANGERS" IS BEAUTIFULLY DEPRESSING AND, UNFORTUNATELY, PROBABLY QUITE TRUE. "BLACK JACK DAVY" IS A VERY "MATTY GROVES"-- TYPE OF SONG. IN THE NOTES IT SAYS THAT STEELEYE SPAN HAD TO PRACTICALLY REWRITE SOME OF THE SONGS AND THAT "BLACK JACK DAVY" IS PROBABLY A MIX OF "RAGGLE TAGGLE GYPSIES" AND "MATTY GROVES." IT'S A REALLY GOOD MARRIAGE. ONE OF MY ALL TIME FAVOURITE STEELEYE SPAN SONGS. "ALLISON GROSE" IS ON HERE, WHICH YOU MAY HAVE ALREADY HEARD. MEDIEVAL GOTHS WILL ALSO LOVE "GAUDETTE," DONE ALL IN LATIN . . . ALMOST LIKE A GREGORIAN CHANT. "THOMAS THE RHYMER" SHOWS OFF MADDY PRIOR'S VOICE AT IT'S LOVELY BEST.

YOU'LL FIND YOURSELF SINGING "ALL AROUND MY HAT," A VERY CATCHY TUNE WITH A FAMILIAR THEME . . . A FALSE DELUDED YOUNG MAN. "DARK EYED SAILOR" IS STEELEYE'S VERSION OF THE TRADITIONAL "RANKS OF THE NILE." SANDY DENNY RECORDED IT WITH FOTHERINGAY. IT PROBABLY HAS MANY REGIONAL VERSIONS IN ENGLAND. THIS ONE IS MORE UPBEAT.

"SAUCY SAILOR" -- I LIKE, JUST BECAUSE I LIKE IT, WHICH IS THE BEST REASON FOR LIKING A SONG.

"LET HER GO DOWN" IS A SONG ABOUT A

BRAVE CAPTAIN TELLING HIS CREW TO LET THE SHIP GO AND SWIM FOR THEIR LIVES, WIVES AND FAMILIES. IT NEVER DOES TELL WHETHER THE CAPTAIN WENT DOWN WITH THE SHIP, BUT THAT IS THE FEELING THAT I GET.

THERE ARE SEVEN MORE SONGS BESIDES THESE I MENTIONED, AND NOT A ONE THAT I DON'T LIKE. AND REMEMBER -- I LIKE ROSETTA STONE, THE NEFILIM, MINISTRY, LONDON AFTER MIDNIGHT, CATASTROPHE RALLET. I LIKE THE SOFTER GOTH TOO AND EARY DEAD CAN DANCE, BUT MY GOTHIC TASTES RUN TO ALIEN SEX FIEND AND, OF COURSE, THE SISTERS OF MERCY TOO.

I'LL BE GOIMNG TO EUROPE AND THE UK AFTER SOME MUCH NEEDED DENTAL WORK ON MY FANGS. I WILL SEND NEWS OF COOL CLUBS, CONCERTS, IMPORT CDS AND FOLK/GOTH FESTIVALS.

THAT'S IT FOR NOW . . . I'M GOING OUTSIDE TO LOOK AT THE MOON.

BLESSINGS,

SALAMANDER

SCARLETTE



MIRROR BLUE -- RICHARD THOMPSON .

Though it's been out for awhile, Richard Thompson's latest is well worth your hard earned bucks (or pounds) if you haven't purchased it yet. The old Master of Doom and Gloom offers up nearly an hour of his own dark world view. It's been a long time since his debut LP, **HENRY THE HUMAN FLY**, but all the elements that made that work a classic are present here. Killer guitar work, superb instrumentation, plus Thompson's own songwriting, which offers up twisted little vignettes of life. Each song is like a mini-novel.

The opener kicks off with a riff reminiscent of Neil Young's "Cinnamon Girl." Then we move into the next song, "I Can't Wake Up To Save My Life," a tune about a vivid nightmare. Next comes "MGB-GT" a car song. On **RUMOR AND SIGH**, he did a motorcycle song -- "52 Vincent Black Lightning."

"Shane and Dixie" give us the tale of two modern day desperados. Jack and Diane meet Bonnie and Clyde

My favorite on the CD, however, is "Beeswing." It has a Celtic feel like many songs on **HUMAN FLY**. The acoustic guitar intro is a classic piece of English folk-rock.

This song also hearkens back to those psychedelic days of the Summer of Love, when we thought music could change the world. How innocent, naive and idealistic we were back then. There's sad fiddle behind the vocals, plus a ghostly set of Northumbrian pipes. I think we all knew a lost child like Beeswing back then. Funny . . . when I was in England in '92, at Cropredy I saw a lot of gypsy/hippies who looked like it was still 1967. Of course, most of them weren't even alive back then . . .

"Beeswing" is a classic, a modern ballad that hearkens back to a bygone era, a lot farther back than the Summer of Love. This song alone is worth the price of the CD.

Back in the 70's, rumor has it that someone once told Richard Thompson's voice was an acquired taste . . . and that he just hadn't acquired a taste for it. Well, I totally disagree. I think RT's got a super voice. It so absolutely suitable to tell the stories he tells in his songs. No matter how twisted they may be . . .

Chuck Owston

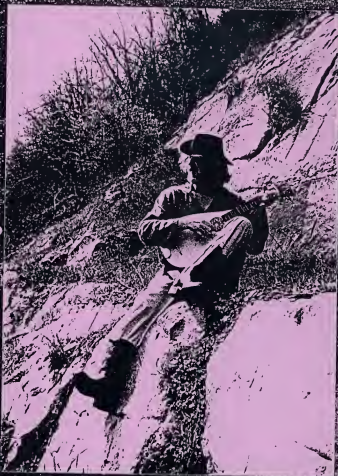
Dark ages

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